

home from overseas we need to support programs such as Troops for Teachers that successfully transition them from the military back into civilian life.

I have seen firsthand the success of this program by visiting teachers in my district who returned from service and used the program's stipend to help pay for teaching certification classes and exams. This amendment is a win-win for our veterans and our students.

I urge my colleagues to vote in support of this bipartisan amendment.

HONORING THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN ON ITS 93RD ANNI- VERSARY OF "REPUBLIC DAY"

HON. DAN BOREN

OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 26, 2011

Mr. BOREN. Mr. Speaker, Speaker, as the co-chairman of the Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus, I ask my colleagues to join me today in honoring the Republic of Azerbaijan as it celebrates its 93rd Republic Day on May 28, 2011. Later this year, Azerbaijan will also celebrate the 20th anniversary of its freedom from the Soviet Union and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States. These events both represent important milestones in Azerbaijan's history.

Azerbaijan has progressed over twenty years to become a key ally to the United States in a strategically important region. Azerbaijan is located between Russia and Iran in the geopolitically dynamic region between Europe and Asia. It is a secular democracy with a predominantly Muslim population that has been home to vibrant Christian and Jewish communities for over a millennium.

Azerbaijan continues to offer multi-faceted support for U.S. and NATO operations in Afghanistan, in part by providing medical services for injured Afghans and training for Afghan Security Forces. As highlighted by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Azerbaijan plays a key role in supporting the Northern Distribution Network, which provides passage for Coalition supplies bound for Afghanistan. Finally, Azerbaijan provides vital support to U.S. nonproliferation efforts.

In addition to supporting U.S. security interests in the region, Azerbaijan serves a paramount role in supplying the United States and Europe with oil and gas. It is the only secular Muslim country that maintains close ties with Israel, supplying roughly a quarter of Israel's oil.

Again, as the co-chairman of the Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus, it is my pleasure to honor the Republic of Azerbaijan on the occasion of its 93rd Republic Day. For my colleagues who are interested in supporting Azerbaijan, I encourage them to consider joining the Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus, which works to strengthen and grow the valuable partnership between the United States and Azerbaijan.

30 YEARS OF DEDICATED WORK BY THE GREAT SWAMP WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 26, 2011

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Great Swamp Watershed Association (GSWA) located in Morris County, New Jersey, which is celebrating 30 years of successful natural resource protection in the Great Swamp Wildlife Refuge.

Thousands of years ago, the melting waters of large retreating glaciers formed a massive glacial lake called Glacial Lake Passaic. Over the years, the lake drained to leave wetlands, which form a part of the Great Swamp in New Jersey. This federally-protected land is home to a large variety of plants, animals, and humans, as well as several federally-designated threatened species.

After the creation of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in 1964, a small group of citizens became concerned with protecting and improving water resources in the ten municipalities that bordered the Great Swamp. In 1981, this grass-roots group created the GSWA in order to protect the land and water in these towns. Through its efforts, the organization has acquired fifty-three acres of property in the area surrounding the Refuge, while working to preserve local streams and maintain local water quality.

The GSWA has grown from its roots to include 2,200 members in over 40 New Jersey municipalities. Today, the organization continues to protect environmentally sensitive land through land acquisition and promoting the strengthening of environmental regulations in New Jersey. With the support of its staff, trustees, and many valuable volunteers, the Association helped develop the first-ever water quality standards for the Great Swamp Watershed, which aid scientists, policy makers and local officials in protecting water resources from further degradation and in restoring those resources that have been harmed. Although the GSWA's work is centered primarily within the towns directly served by the Great Swamp Watershed, the results of its persistence extend to the more than one million people in Northern New Jersey who obtain their drinking water from the Passaic River.

In addition, the GSWA fosters environmental awareness and provides environmental education for children and adults throughout the state. Over 1,500 students have benefitted from its three-dimensional watershed model that illustrates how individual and group actions affect water quality in the local area. The organization invites teachers to participate in programs that show them how to use their own school grounds as areas for environmental education. The GSWA also offers several family programs within the watershed that introduce area residents to the natural history in their own backyards. In providing these programs, the GSWA teaches communities of the ecological value of the Great Swamp watershed, as well as the importance of restoring the property and protecting it from land development.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Great Swamp Watershed Association for its 30 years of

dedicated work on behalf of the great State of New Jersey.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZA- TION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2012

SPEECH OF

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 25, 2011

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1540) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2012 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2012, and for other purposes:

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Chair, today, I rise on behalf of all of West Virginia's National Guard and proudly support the Miller/Rahall amendment based on my legislation, the Guardians of Freedom Act of 2011—a bill to elevate the Chief of the National Guard Bureau to a position on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The body politic of the National Guard—nearly a half-million strong supports this amendment, as does the National Guard Coalition, composed of Adjutants General Association, the National Guard Association, and Enlisted Association of the National Guard.

The National Guard is one of our Nation's longest-standing institutions, empowered by Congress and providing to the States a highly trained and well-equipped force to protect life and property. Over the course of its nearly four-hundred year history, the National Guard has remained a dual State-Federal force, providing security on the home front and fighting threats to our Nation and our freedoms all over the globe.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 brought about historic empowerment changes for the National Guard, elevating the Chief of the National Guard to the rank of four-star general and providing the Chief a stronger voice inside the Pentagon. This year, the 2012 Defense Authorization bill also adds a vice-chief to assist with the increasing responsibilities of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau. But we must do more in giving the Chief a seat at the negotiating table.

As a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau would have responsibility and authority to advocate and coordinate the Guard's war fighting support and force provider mission with its homeland security and support missions to ensure the Guard has the resources to perform its multiple missions and fulfill its Constitutional role to our States.

Madam Chair, from the battlefield to the home fields, our National Guard—America's patriots—exemplifies sacrifice and commitment to duty.

West Virginians volunteer for the National Guard at nearly double the national rate. The West Virginia National Guard has 38 units and activities stationed in 22 counties throughout West Virginia, and currently has units deployed in military operations around the world.

The American people owe an enormous debt of gratitude to our nearly 500,000 men and women members of the National Guard in